

THE FAIR TAX AND TAX REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, this year Americans worked almost 100 days, from January 1 to April 9, to pay taxes at the Federal, State, and local levels, which is more than one-fourth of their income. I believe that it is totally unacceptable to require already stressed families to give up such a high share of their income while bloated Federal bureaucracy continues to expand during a severe recession. To reduce this burden, Congress should now focus on reforming the current complicated tax structure which makes it so much more difficult for families and small business owners to experience economic recovery.

As I called for in my last speech on tax reform, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. LEVIN), needs to schedule hearings on tax reform simplicity as soon as possible. The Fair Tax proposal is one of those ideas that I believe the committee must consider. The Fair Tax is definitely a serious proposal that is backed by many Americans, including so many constituents of my congressional district, and it deserves our full consideration.

The Fair Tax would replace all Federal income and payroll-based taxes with a national retail sales tax and includes a rebate to ensure that no American below the poverty level pays Federal taxes. If enacted, the Fair Tax proposal would provide a dollar-for-dollar Federal revenue neutrality. According to the proposal's advocates, the Fair Tax would reform the current tax code. Today's tax code is unfair, costly, and confusing, and is so complex that many of us pay more in taxes per year than we should. It is estimated that the present system costs taxpayers \$265 billion for tax filing, tax record-keeping, tax reduction advice, et cetera, which is \$900 for every man, woman and child in America. This is taxation without comprehension.

The current income tax code inhibits economic growth, it inhibits capital formation, and it inhibits job creation. Fair Tax supporters believe tax reform can correct these problems by greatly reducing the high cost of compliance in the present system while lifting the income tax burden on production. I believe that a fair and balanced look at the Fair Tax should begin the conversation on tax reform, and I encourage my colleagues who are serious about having this discussion to join me in contacting the chairman.

Congress needs to remember the sacrifices that are made by each American family by making a real effort at tax reform this year.

As the American economy continues to stagnate with a record 10 percent unemployment rate, Congress needs to respond by taking a close look at tax reform, and yes, the Fair Tax also.

SUPPORTING ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL TEACHER DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. KLEIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KLEIN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 403, legislation I introduced calling for the establishment of a National Teacher Day. I believe it is important that we recognize the hard work of our Nation's teachers who prepare our students for a stronger America. The education of our children is critical to the future success of our country and our global competitiveness. And despite limited compensation and increasingly high expectations, our teachers rise to the challenge each and every day.

As the son of an elementary school teacher—my mom taught second grade, I was proud to introduce this resolution. My mother, and so many other teachers across the country, spend their lives working to inspire children and open their minds to new ideas so they can grow up to be successful in whatever path they choose.

I am sure that each and every one of my colleagues in Congress can identify at least one teacher from their past who made a difference in their lives. I know that I wouldn't be where I am today without the motivation and encouragement of teachers who challenged me to pursue my dreams of public service. This legislation also comes at an extremely critical time for our Nation's teachers. In this tough economy, State budgets are suffering, and it is important more than ever that we find solutions to budget challenges that threaten to cut academic programs and lay off good teachers to the detriment of our children and the future workforce of our country.

Rather than slash school budgets, increase classroom sizes, and stretch our teachers even thinner than we already have, we must work to keep good teachers in the classroom and incentivize more people to enter the teacher workforce. We cannot improve our education system in the United States if we don't invest in quality teaching as it is. That is why I have consistently voted to prevent massive statewide layoffs of our education professionals.

I would also like to thank my distinguished colleague, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. ROSKAM) for joining me in introducing this important piece of legislation, and thank the overwhelming number of Members who have joined me in support of the establishment of a National Teacher Day.

Mr. Speaker, when you get a chance, thank teachers for the great work that they do.

STOP IRAN'S NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest threats to peace in the Middle East and possibly the whole world is for the United States and our friends and allies around the world to stop Iran's nuclear development program. We have been working for months and months to come up with a very strong Iran sanctions bill. The bill has finally passed the House and Senate, and because of the differences, we are in a conference committee. We have a very strong bill, one that will put extreme pressure on Iran and possibly avert a war in the Middle East. But now we are hearing that the bill is going to be watered down. It is going to be made weaker. If it is made weaker, that means the pressure will not be put on Iran that should be, and they will continue with their nuclear development program and we could be in a war in the Middle East that will far exceed what we have seen in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I want to read to you from a report that was issued just last week. "Iran has set up new equipment that will allow it to boost its efficiency at enriching uranium at higher levels. Iran's clandestine enrichment activities were discovered 8 years ago and have expanded since to encompass thousands of centrifuges churning out material enriched to 3.5 percent. But despite three sets of Security Council sanctions meant to enforce demands of a freeze, Tehran moved to a new level in February, when it set up a small program to produce material enriched to near 20 percent." And 20 percent can be used for a nuclear weapon.

The story continued, "But the move has increased concerns because it brings the Islamic Republic closer to the ability to produce warhead material. Uranium at 3.5 percent can be used to fuel reactors, which is Iran's avowed purpose for enrichment. If enriched to around 95 percent, however, it can be used in building a nuclear bomb. And at 20 percent, uranium can be turned into weapons-grade material much more quickly than from lower levels.

"The 20-percent uranium is being produced by 'a cascade'—164 centrifuges hooked up in series. The diplomats said that Iranian technicians had in recent weeks assembled another 164-centrifuge cascade, and the throw of a switch appeared ready to activate it to support the machines already turning out small amounts of near 20-percent uranium."

We don't know how long it is going to be before Iran has nuclear weapons, but we know it is not going to be too long. And every day we wait to put pressure on Iran is a day they are closer to developing nuclear technology that could start a war over there, obliterate our friends in Israel, and cause a major war that we will have to be involved with.

We get about 40 percent of our energy from the Middle East. And if a war